



Health Protection Duty Room

Public Health Agency

12-22 Linenhall Street

Belfast

BT2 8BS

Website:- www.publichealth.hscni.net

11/10/2021

Arvalee Special School

Strule Campus
Gortin Road
OMAGH
TYRONE
BT79 7DH

Dear Parent/Guardian,

CASE OF COVID-19 IN Arvalee Special School

The Public Health Agency has been notified of a case of COVID-19 associated with Arvalee Special School. We have worked with the school principal to undertake a risk assessment and it has identified your child as a **close contact**. Your child's last date of contact with the case was **04/10/2021**. This date is counted as **Day Zero**.

The advice on what to do if a close contact changed on 16th August 2021 so even if you have had letters before from the school about this issue, please take time to read this one.

Advice to self-isolate and arrange a COVID test

Until the 16th August 2021 all people identified as close contacts of a case were advised to self-isolate for 10 days. But there are now some exemptions to that advice which are set out on NI Direct [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating). These allow the self-isolation period to be shortened if certain conditions

are met. The advice is different depending on whether your child has had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days (see below for details).

Even if you follow the advice in this letter and your child is well and has negative PCR results, they **should avoid visiting hospitals or care homes for 10 days.** They should also minimise contact with people who are at higher risk if they were to catch COVID-19, such as the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.

What to do if your child is a close contact but has no symptoms

A) If your child has had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days

If your child has had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days AND has no new symptoms, you do not need to take any action and your child can continue to attend school. We do not advise retesting in recently infected people who are well, because PCR tests can continue to find non-infectious parts of the virus for several weeks. However, if your child does develop **new symptoms** they should stay at home and get a free PCR test as soon as possible. They should self-isolate at home until they get the result of that test.

B) If your child has not had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days

Please arrange a free PCR test as soon as possible even if they do not have any symptoms. **They should self-isolate at home until they get the result of the test.** The rest of the household can carry on with their normal activities as long as all are well. **If that test result is negative your child can return to school. However please book another PCR test 8 days after their last known contact with the confirmed case.** If either test is positive they should self-isolate for 10 days from the date the positive test was done.

How to book a test

You can book a test online at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by phoning 119. When you are booking the PCR test online, under the section 'why are you asking

for a test', please select 'I have been told by contact tracers to get a test.' When asked for a code, please enter 2316661S. We are asking you to enter the code as it helps us monitor and assess COVID clusters when they occur. While you should still be able to book a test even if you do not enter the code, it helps us if you do.

Tests can be arranged at your closest testing site or by requesting a postal kit which will be sent to your home address. You can choose whichever option is more convenient for you. Going for a COVID test is one of the reasons your child can leave home during the self-isolation period, however, they should not use public transport. Please order a postal test if you do not have private transport to a test site.

Positive PCR test results in people who are close contacts

If the test is positive:

A **new** period of self-isolation will begin for your child, for 10 days from the date of the test. You will be contacted by the PHA contact tracing service who will ask about the vaccination status of adults in the household to decide whether they need to self-isolate, identify other contacts and provide you with advice about what to do next. If your child is well at the end of the period of self-isolation, then they can return to usual activities.

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

Please book a free PCR test, **even if an earlier one was negative**. Your child should stay at home and self-isolate until you receive the result. Please see [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) for guidance on whether other people in your household also need to self-isolate while you are waiting for your child's PCR result.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

- **Please get vaccinated if you are eligible and haven't already done so**
- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

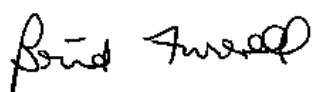
Further information

For further information, please see the NI Direct website [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) the Public Health Agency website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus> or contact NHS 111. If your child feels unwell and you are worried about their symptoms or about anyone else in the home, please contact your GP.

I know that organising tests and staying at home waiting for results may be hard for you and your child but it is vital to help reduce the risk of transmission in the community.

Your support is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Brid Farrell

Acting Director of Public Health